



Art Fairs



Pride in Pictures Part 3



13 Fringe Festival Shows Not to Miss

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Volume 17, Issue 422
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2011

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AUGUST 5-7

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SATURDAY: 10AM - 8PM

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LOCATED INSIDE CALHOUN SQUARE

AUGUST 5, 1:00PM - 5:00PM

Featuring exhibits, interactive demonstrations by professional artists & raffles for classes, artwork & more, this event aims to teach older adults about arts education opportunities in their community.

YOUTH ART FAIR (TOMORROW'S STARS)

LOCATED INSIDE CALHOUN SQUARE

A diverse group of artists between the ages of 8 & 18 will display, discuss, and sell their work. Stop by to purchase work from future art fair artists.

Download Park & Pedal map: goo.gl/0fO9y

PERFORMANCE STAGE & WINE GARDEN

LOCATED AT OLD CHICAGO (2841 HENNEPIN AVE)

FRIDAY:

1 PM: Silent Agency
2 PM: Six Appeal
3 PM: Big in Japan
4 PM: Minneami Salsa
5 PM: Urban Cadence
6 PM: Sister of the Sahara
8 PM: Blatant Youth

SATURDAY:

12 PM: Social Dance Studio
1 PM: Sansei Yonsei Kai
2 PM: O'Shea Irish Dance
3 PM: Dee Miller Band
4 PM: Batucada do Norte
5 PM: Rhythmically Speaking
6 PM: Forty Shades of Green
8 PM: MelloRoar

SUNDAY:

12 PM: Ryan Flannery & the Night Owls
1 PM: Riverside Swing Band
2 PM: Jawaahir Dance Company
3 PM: TCC Gospel Choir
4 PM: Capital Sons

FREE BIKE VALET PARKING LOCATED AT THE INTERSECTION OF HUMBOLDT AVE & THE MALL (NEAR THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY TRAIL)

Open daily- 15 minutes before the fair opens and until 15 minutes after the fair closes.

METRO TRANSIT ART PASS Download the Art Pass for free bus & light rail rides (not available on Northstar) Passes available at UPTOWNARTFAIR.COM, Uptown Information booth (Lagoon + Hennepin) & METROTRANSIT.ORG/ARTPASS

PARK & PEDAL Drivers can park their vehicles in centralized locations for free & then bike to the fair using their own wheels or Nice Ride MN cycles. (Free parking options not available on Friday from 12PM - 5:30PM.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 612.823.4581 • UPTOWNARTFAIR.COM





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JULY 28-AUGUST 10, 2011 | **ISSUE 422** | PRIDE IN PICTURES 3, 13 FRINGE FESTIVAL SHOWS NOT TO MISS

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ON THE COVER

Wanda Wisdom and the sailors from the Guthrie's performance of Gilbert & Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Photo by Mike Hnida.



Photo by Nick Lethert

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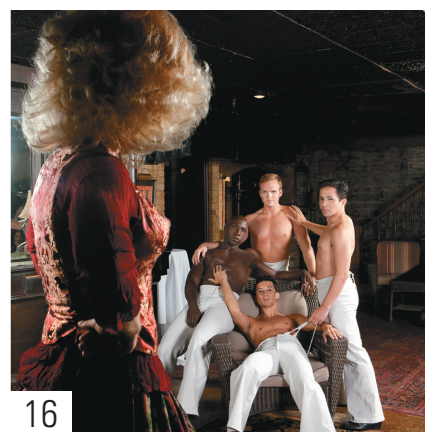


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Send all your calendar events to Linda@lavendermagazine.com

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PASSING

by George Holdgrafer

FELIX M. LOPEZ JR. [1967-2011]



Photo Courtesy of Gary Hallberg

Felix M. Lopez Jr., 44, passed away accidentally on June 28 in St. Paul. Services were held in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Lopez was born March 18, 1967, in Corpus Christi. After graduating from Roma High School, he attended PanAm University in Texas, where he studied criminal justice. He rose to manager at Domino's Pizza while in college.

An avid athlete and sports fan, Lopez played soccer into his late 30s. He loved to travel and make friends all over the country. NASCAR was a favorite destination in Dallas, Homestead, and Phoenix. He loved Costa Rica, planning to return there soon.

Lopez is survived by his partner, Gary Hallberg, owner of the 19 Bar in Minneapolis. The two met in 1994 in Texas. They were inseparable from that time on.

As well, Lopez is survived by his family at the 19 Bar: the staff and patrons. He is also survived by his mother, four sisters, and four brothers, all of Texas.

Felix Lopez was the happiest, warmest, most-friendly person you could ever know. He will forever be missed, forever loved. □



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It's 4:45am, the morning of my first photo shoot for a cover feature as the Managing Editor of *Lavender Magazine*. *Lavender*, the same magazine I can recall from my first year in college in black and purplish newsprint that's grown into the lasting voice of the GLBT community in the region. *Lavender*, the magazine I've watched mature and become more colorful and full of content whether in times of feast or famine—the one that remains free to its community, in both print and digital formats. *Lavender*, the magazine that carries with it the hopes and dreams of my bleeding heart, shouldering the heavy weight of representing a multi-faceted community while requiring doses of business and whimsy as well.

This morning? A photo shoot with a drag queen and tap-dancing sailors.

I've got your whimsy in spades. It's the rest of it that keeps me up at night.

A litany of other thoughts cross my mind. The niggling thoughts of a new editor. Important thoughts about whether or not my cupcakes will melt in the skyrocketing heat index before we've gotten a shot with their cute branded fondant decorations. Wait. Worse, *will my drag queen melt* under the same atmospheric duress?

Am I showing bias toward St. Paul by shooting at Selby and Western? How many shades of skin tone will be shown on the cover? Will socioeconomic status be evident? Will it somehow be obvious that we all went to school on Financial Aid? Will my next cover shoot involve lesbians to make up for the men on this one? Trans folks? Bisexuals? Wait, *how do I know?* Is the feature content consistent with the tone and timbre of *Lavender*? Is it pertinent? Eye-catching? Will people want to pick it up? Will our advertisers find value in its pages? Does a white drag queen cancel out all of the other diversity points? It's equitably representative if a large percentage of our readers are blonde, white men *like* Wanda Wisdom, right?

Stop.

At a certain point, I have to settle down and be confident that my cognizance is to be trusted and my instincts are good. This is the first shoot of many with *Lavender*. My business savvy and interdisciplinary background make for an appropriate foundation on which to build content for a niche-to-norm publication such as this for the GLBT community in the Twin Cities and beyond. Our photographer, Mike, is a talented professional with a portfolio of highly artistic fashion and product shoots. Our Wanda, Brad, is an extremely conscientious and humorous commentator and entertainer. And the sailors of *H.M.S.*



Pinafore? I'm prepared to be floored by their professionalism and panache.

We've got this.

These are exciting times at *Lavender*. While refreshing our approach to our print magazine with defined story arcs and editorial focus, we're also developing a new content-rich website that will roll out in August. We're switching our thinking from the two-week print constraints to open up the floodgates to the content of the community. My baptism by fire started the weekend of Pride and hasn't slowed down yet. The deadlines are every-other-week and the content is flying at me at a fast and furious rate. Our events ensure that I get to meet readers and hear news of what can be covered online or in future issues. Already, at one First Thursday event, I came away

with multiple story leads from looking into the award-winning film, *Au Pair, Kansas*, by J.T. O'Neal, to the still-filming work by Pam Colby, *Fertile Ashes*, based on an underground lesbian club in St. Paul back in 1972. I met potential writers for *Lavender*. I learned about the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival thanks to Terry, Nita, and Kim. I was introduced to folks from the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus, OutFront Minnesota, and the Twin Cities Human Rights Campaign.

I've only dipped a toe in the pool and I am absolutely thrilled by what the future will bring.

Most immediately, my future brings me tap-dancing sailors...which is more than just a little bit delightful.

With pride and thanks,
Andy



Melissa Houghtaling

Rebecca Heltzer



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NY: No Rights or Rites Have Been Harmed

Mike Gillis's (KLAY AM; 1180 Tacoma), recent blog title, "Christian Privilege: Not Being Allowed to Dominate Others Doesn't Mean You're Being Oppressed" goes to the heart of the gay marriage matter.

The recent decision in New York to let same sex partners marry legally does not signal a new era where gays and lesbians have "more" rights than heterosexuals, merely that they have the same rights—though not, as yet, under Federal law—as their fellow citizens to choose a life partner and assume the privileges and burdens as their straight married neighbors.

A church or synagogue may bestow a spiritual seal to a couple's nuptials, but the civil arm of the state confirms the union's legal existence. The recent law is all about the civil side. No Christian religious body is being attacked, undermined or discredited, nor is a given church being forced to marry anyone.

Google "Christian" in any number of sources and you'll find that adherents comprise roughly 75 percent of the religious affiliations in the United States, while all of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism together make up only 5 percent; undecided, atheists and so forth, account for the remainder.

Gillis effectively summarizes that, "...human rights are not a popularity contest. The people with the greatest numbers can change the tax system, or affect policy changes on things like roads or healthcare, but they cannot enforce their religious beliefs on any minority. And this is what many Christians seem to have a real problem with. No one's rights are being trampled if same-sex marriage is legalized."

I've made the point here before that if the civil rights of African-Americans and other people of color had been left to a popular vote, there would still be Jim Crow laws on the books. You don't have to like it that your black neighbor can vote or that your gay neighbor can marry: but those facts do not mean that your rights are being infringed upon when they do.

No one has yet given me a reason why the marriage of two men or two women would rock the foundation of anyone's heterosexual union. Of course, this applies to religions other than Christianity; dietary, sexual laws and prohibitions that are enforced within those religions cannot bar others from eating meat, or pork, and so forth.

The religious rites of one group, however populous, do not outweigh or cancel the civil rights of others. ■

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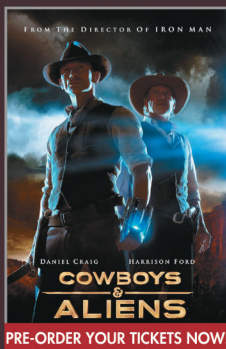
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GLIMPSES

by Andy Lien



Duran Elected Minnesota State Bar Association Treasurer

July 2011: Phil Duran, Legal Director of OutFront Minnesota and staff attorney for Management Assistance Program (MAP) for Nonprofits, was elected Treasurer of the Minnesota State Bar Association (MSBA). Duran's extensive experience advocating a variety of diversity issues includes the MSBA's 2010 endorsement of a marriage-equality resolution.

Photo: Phil Duran, Andy Lien (*Lavender Magazine*), and Rebecca Waggoner (OutFront Minnesota) Photo by Sophia Hantzes




Gen Silent Film brings GLBT Aging Issues into the Open

Gen Silent is the new GLBT documentary from award-winning director and documentary filmmaker Stu Maddux that asks six GLBT seniors if they will hide their lives to survive. Screening at St. Anthony Main Theatre at 7:00 pm on August 11, the film will be followed by a panel discussion at 8:00pm and a social hour at Wilde Roast Café at 8:30pm. Presented by Rainbow Health Initiative, register to attend at <http://trainingtoserve.org/gensilent.html>

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CITY OF LAKES, CITY OF ART

Minneapolis Crams Three Art Fairs into One Weekend



Loring Art Fair. Photo by Sher Stoneman; Powderhorn Art Fair. Photo by Nick Lethert; Uptown Art Fair. Photo Courtesy of Uptown Art Fair

Alfred de Musset tells us that great artists have no country, but great artists will have a city during the first weekend in August: our beloved City of Lakes, Minneapolis.

The **Uptown Art Fair** will celebrate its 48th incarnation under the theme of “Art Meets Life.” The Fair manifests in its traditional locus, where Hennepin Avenue meets Lake Street, better known as Calhoun Square. This year’s commemorative artist is former Minnesota Vikings linebacker Matt Blair who knocks flat on its hindquarters the notion of art being just for sissies. “Photography and football have always been my passions,” Blair acknowledges. “I carry my camera everywhere I go to capture different viewpoints and perspectives we might not notice with our own eyes.” Encouraging future artists is also part of the Uptown Art Fair’s *raison d’être*. The Fair will feature “Tomorrow’s Stars Youth Art Fair,” uniting 40 creators between the ages of 8 and 18. Perhaps most inspiring is an expo that focuses on older adults: it will feature exhibits, interactive demonstrations by professional artists, and raffles for classes, artwork and more. In this way, life meets art just as surely as art meets life. <http://www.uptownartfair.com/>

The **Powderhorn Art Fair** will observe its 20th anniversary this year. This landmark has inspired a collection of Fair-oriented memories, which will be tent-poled by two longtime exhibitors: jeweler Mimi Spencer and Chinese brush painter Charlotte Fung Miller. Powderhorn Art Fair features precisely 184 national and local artists of varied disciplines. Some of these artists are not just local, but thoroughly local:

a space has been set aside for group exhibitors from the Powderhorn area specifically. Art of a more performance-oriented stripe will be provided by Open Eye Figure Theatre and Articulture. For people who prefer art absorbed through the eardrums, acoustic music will be furnished by Dan Rein (who specializes in Iranian stringed instruments), Tom Klein (who labors lovingly over Irish bagpipes), and the group Ensemble Limousine (which describes its sound as an eclectic French mix). The Fair, naturally, takes place in the bucolic, 66-acre Park from which it takes its name. <http://powderhornartfair.org/>

Within the shadow of the Basilica of Saint Mary, the **Loring Park Art Festival** will commemorate its 12th birthday in 2011. The official press release quotes the Art Fair SourceBook: “This is an up-and-coming show in the Twin Cities...many many patrons who attend prefer it...because it’s an easier show to see, more compact.” This fair considers its very setting a work of art, the trees and the pond forming a de facto outdoor gallery into whose tranquility the lined booths are carefully dovetailed. If you think that the Loring Park Art Festival’s older cousins would have exhausted the city’s supply of artists and artwork, you’d be understandably wrong: this Festival features juried artwork proffered by 140 artists. The Festival’s overarching goal is cover the whole canvas of expression—every medium, style, and price range uniting to achieve art’s finest purpose: something for everyone. <http://www.loring-parkartfestival.com/>. ■

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Poor Little WANDACUP

by Wanda Wisdom

"All the world's my stage, and all the men and women merely my fans." Truer words have ne'er been spoken. Actually, I don't think those words have e'er been spoken 'afore.' Other than in my head.





WANDACUP

The salty seductress and ferry-hopping honey from Gilbert & Sullivan's classic comic opera, *H.M.S. Pinafore*!



You see, ever since I was a wee little Wandita, I've wanted nothing more than to be on the big stage and screen. And TV. And magazine covers and lunch boxes. And, had there been personal computers or the Internets back in the day, it's safe to say I'd have wanted to be plastered all over them as well. Some of you might call that a sickness. I call it my 'gift to the world.'

From puppet shows at family picnics to podcasting live from the basement of an old Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall in south Minneapolis, the last 36 years of my life have been little more than one big audition for that inevitable big break. The one chance to shine for all the world live on stage in front of my countless adoring fans. My destiny.

And guess what? It's happened. Finally!

A couple weeks ago my agent, Andy Lien, called. She insists on calling herself the 'editor' of *Lavender Magazine* instead of my agent, but I think that's just because she wants to avoid all the attention that comes along with representing one of the largest personalities in the entire upper Midwest. I can understand that. Good for her.

Anyway, back to my story about me.

It seems the Guthrie called to offer me a part! And not just any part. The role of Buttercup! You

know, the salty seductress and ferry-hopping honey from Gilbert & Sullivan's classic comic opera, *H.M.S. Pinafore*!

I was flabbergasted! You normally have to audition for a part like that, I thought to myself. My mind reeled. They must've seen my videos on YouTube or something.

I was so excited, I could barely understand anything Andy was telling me. Her words were drowned out by the flood of images flying across my mind. My name in big bright letters on the marquee and under the star on my dressing room door. The electric audiences on their feet, night after night, applauding my performance. I bet this is how Barbra Streisand felt when she got the lead role in *Funny Girl*.

I regained consciousness just as Andy was yammering on about a photo shoot I needed to do for *Lavender* with some of my new fellow cast members. Publicity photos before rehearsals? That's odd, I thought to myself. Isn't that kind of putting the cart before the horse? I haven't even read the script yet or had the chance to update my Facebook status. Oh well, must be how they do things nowadays in the theater world. Clearly, I've got a lot to learn about becoming a theater diva.

Anyway, the shoot was fabulous. I got to meet a lot of the cast and crew from the

production. Gosh, they were so nice to me. Not once did they mention the fact that I was going to be the big star of the show. Actually, not even when I asked them direct questions about when rehearsals start or if they knew where my dressing room was going to be. Most of them just laughed, knowingly. Like they didn't want to spill the beans on the street until the news hit all the major networks and newspapers. Real professionals.

As a token of my affection and to show I wanted to be treated just like any other part of the company, I brought along some cupcakes from Sweets Bakeshop, decorated in the style of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. They scarfed 'em down in a jiffy. Actors are known for their appetites. Stick with me, kid, and you'll learn a thing or two.

At the end of the shoot, I thanked everyone again for welcoming me to the production and told them how much I looked forward to opening night. Again, they just looked around with feigned blank stares and laughed. God, they're good.

I'm still not sure when rehearsals are supposed to start or exactly when the production will open, but, don't worry fans, I'll let you know. I haven't even gotten a script in the mail or anything yet, but that's OK. I've been rehearsing my lines from videos I found on YouTube.



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CREDITS

Produced by Andy Lien
Photography by Mike Hnida, Lavender Studios
Sailors: Nathaniel Braga, J. Tyler Whitmer, Alfie Parker, Jr., Adrian Pena
Wanda's Hair & Make-up: Robb Grier
Sailors' Hair & Make-up: Brook Landers
Location: WA Frost and Company, www.wafrost.com
Cupcakes: Sweets Bakeshop, www.sweetsbakeshop.com
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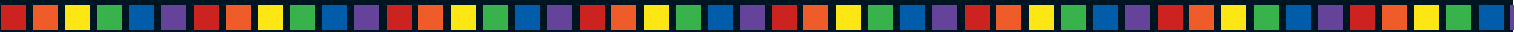


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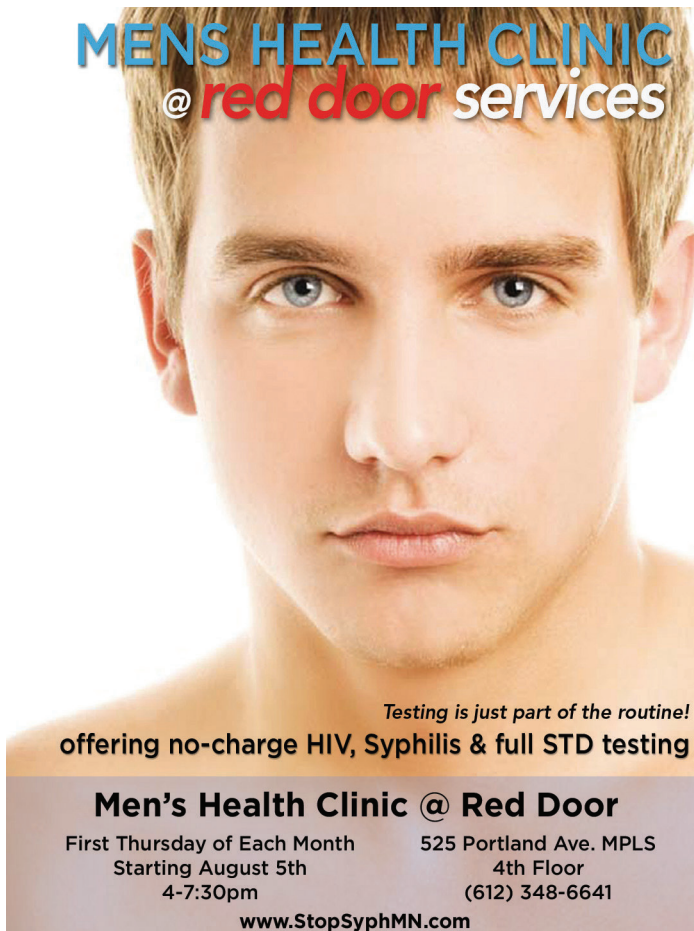


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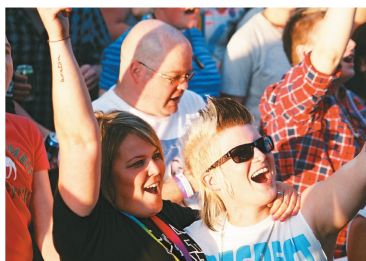
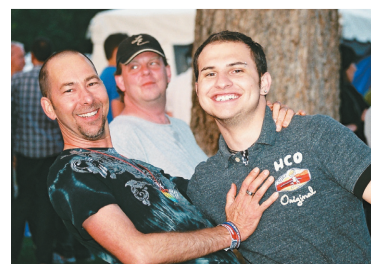
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Violent Murder in Myanmar Prompts Police Warning to Gay Community

The Myanmar Times reports that, following a local gay man's vicious stabbing death in May, police in Myanmar have blamed the man's "lifestyle" in part for his death. They argued he "created the opportunity for the murder to be committed" through his lifestyle. Homosexuality is illegal in Myanmar. A suspect has already been arrested in the case.

Last Inmate Gets Parole in Houston Gay Beating Death

The Woodlands Villager reports that Jon Buice, the last of ten men convicted for the 1991 brutal murder of openly gay

Paul Broussard, was granted parole Friday, just three days before the 20th anniversary of his murder. Buice and nine other male high school students beat, stabbed, and stomped Broussard to death outside a Houston area gay bar. Buice was found to have delivered the stab wounds that ultimately led to Broussard's death. Broussard's family said they were stunned when they learned Buice was paroled after serving only 19 of his 45 year sentence.

Obama Administration Asks Appeals Court To Reinstate DADT
The AP reports that the Obama administration is asking the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to reconsider its order last week to

halt further enforcement of the military's ban on openly gay service members. Lawyers for the Justice Department said the order would interfere with the "orderly process" already underway to repeal the ban. In a statement, the Justice Dept. said, "Any court-ordered action forced upon the military services so close to the completion of this repeal policy pre-empts the deliberate process established by Congress and the President to ensure an orderly and successful transition of this significant policy change." Attorneys for the Log Cabin Republicans, who originally brought the case, responded to the administration's decision, saying, "It is sad

and disappointing that the government continues to try to prevent openly gay and lesbian Americans from serving in our armed forces."

Bachmann Under Fire Over Husband's Anti-Gay Therapy Practice

The Washington Post reports that Minnesota congresswoman and GOP presidential candidate Michele Bachmann and her husband Marcus are being criticized by mental health professionals for providing so-called "reparative therapy" to gay clients. Marcus Bachmann has denied the center offers the therapy, but undercover video released by ABC News shows a therapist at the center telling a gay client he could become straight through prayer. Bachmann has declined to comment on the video footage, but said she was "proud" of their counseling business.

California Gov Signs Landmark Law to Teach Gay History

FOX News reports that, following Gov Jerry Brown's signature Thursday, California becomes the first US state to require public schools to include gay history in social studies classes. In response to critics the legislation's author, San Francisco Sen. Mark Leno said, "We should not be afraid to teach our children of the broad diversity of human experience." The state must now draw up guidelines for local school districts and their teachers to determine what should be included in the curriculum.

Florida University Breaks Barriers for Trans Students

by Ellen Krug

➔ The University of South Florida, located in Tampa, announced earlier this month that applications for dormitory housing for the upcoming school year will contain a new category of gender: "transitioning," for transgender students. This is an expansion from the traditional "male," and "female," gender categories. This groundbreaking change in school housing options came about after a transgender student complained of a "negative experience in on-campus housing" last year, according to a USF press release. That student, Taylor McCue, worked with USF housing officials to devise a new housing arrangement that takes into account the unique issues facing transgender students who are transitioning. Under the new plan, if a student checks, "transitioning," on the housing application, university housing officials will present the student with the option of a single dormitory room with bathroom or a two bedroom suite with shared bathroom. The transgender student can designate a specific person as a roommate. The most controversial aspect of the plan is that the transgender student can elect to simply play the housing lottery and be assigned a roommate randomly based on the transgender student's assigned gender at birth. As the plan presently exists, the randomly selected roommate would not be advised of the transitioning status of his or her roommate. □



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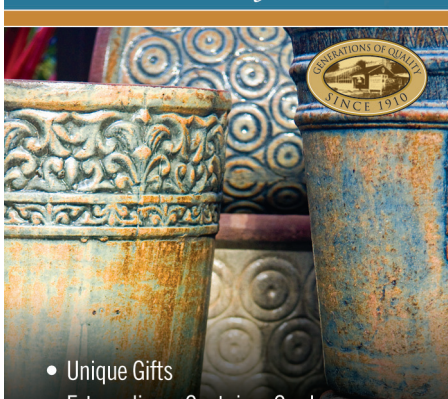
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VIOLENCE (IN RHETORIC) BEGETS VIOLENCE

I recently contributed a commentary piece to the Minneapolis Star Tribune drawing connections between hate speech in its legislative forms and violence toward GLBT citizens; connections that are more than obvious to our community. That article was sparked by my own experience as a victim of a hate crime; my friend Larry and I were assaulted in front of the Oak Grove Hotel on the eve of Pride weekend.

We were shoved around, verbally abused and threatened; there were far more violent attacks over Pride weekend. We're both Scandinavians who tend to minimize traumas. I might say to a concerned friend, "It's fortunate that we weren't seriously injured. We were very lucky." The reality is that Larry and I were plunged plenty deep into the well of homophobic hell. But we were only shaken; we weren't shattered. There are many more victims who are so deep in that well that you can't hear them.

The just-released report from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs states that 50.1% of hate violence survivors did not report to the police. And, nationally, reports of anti-LGBTQH hate violence increased by 13% from 2009 to 2010. Those are dismaying statistics. The NCAVP studies have also shown that violent crimes against us occur more frequently in June, July and August, when Pride festivals are held.

In conversation with Rebecca Waggoner, OutFront MN's Anti-Violence Program Director, I learned that discussions have resurfaced about resuming neighborhood patrols. As she related this and other unsettling information, she often said, "I don't

mean to scare you," implying, "Don't panic. Don't go into hiding, but be aware."


I've learned much in the past few weeks about the relationships among police departments, our elected officials, LGTB organizations and the media. They're all overstretched all of the time. As a crime victim I feel a great sense of urgency, and time stands still while I wait for important information or a phone call that isn't returned. And sometimes the barriers to progress seem insurmountable. As Bill, my North Carolina buddy says, "Lord, seems you have to go around a mountain to get where you want to get to." Amen. And, indeed, when I read my early "crime journal" entries, my lack of confidence and my impatience are more than apparent. But I've learned that we do have allies in elected offices, at OutFront MN, in the media, and in the police department who do listen, consider carefully and compassionately, and follow through.

It's my fervent hope that no other lives are thrown off course and that no others are injured or killed as anti-gay rhetoric begins to crescendo toward the 2012 election. We have the power to respond—as we have in the recent past—by calling out the sponsors

of hate speech, boycotting their businesses, and challenging the media that takes their advertising dollars. On July 1, the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board ruled against Tom Prichard (Minnesota Family Council) in his attempt to hide pro-amendment contributions via the pernicious "Citizens United" ruling. Prichard's claim that disclosure would expose donors to retribution, vandalism and violence from amendment opponents is a clear contender for this year's "Stunning Irony" award. It's the donors' fear of political and social stigma that goads them to hide. Because they know, deep in their hard hearts, that the anti-gay rhetoric they foment precipitates violent attacks against us.

Their rocks have been lifted; we can see their serpentine forms and name them. For starters, if you'd like to meet the top donors who helped put the marriage amendment on the ballot, go online and enter the search terms "donors behind putting gay marriage on the Minnesota ballot."

I've been able to advocate for myself during this ordeal. I won't go Norwegian on you by calling that fortunate. It's been a major pain. I've also had great support from many people and organizations, and I am fortunate to be part of a network of great friends and family. There are many others who are alone and shattered in the aftermath of a violent homophobic attack. My next step is to find a way to advocate for them.

I'm obviously preaching to the choir in this space. I have just one more comment: Get out there and sing! 

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H.M.S. Pinafore. Photo by Michal Daniel

H.M.S. Pinafore — Why does Gilbert and Sullivan's 1878 operetta *H.M.S. Pinafore* still have legs? My theory is that it hits two central nerves: (1) it savages political favoritism in the military, and (2) it challenges the way marriage was and, frequently, still is defined. The Guthrie's current revival reverberates now because its observations can actually apply to contemporary American events.

In April '08 the New York Times's David Barstow exposed how the Pentagon secretly paid retired high-ranking military men to disinform the US public about Bush's war policy. For over five years we'd seen networks (not just Fox) trot out lying old curmudgeons squawking official lies. Hence, Peter Thomson's deliciously disgustingly decadent performance as Sir Joseph Porter, First Lord of the Admiralty, strikes contemporary parallels. Based on a real life figure from Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli's administration, here's the top navy secretary who knows nothing of ships! (Remember Bush's incompetent 'heck of a job' Brownie, FEMA Chief during Katrina?)

Pinafore's class-challenging advocacy for love between a mere working-class sailor and the loftier Captain's daughter may not be the same-sex marriage battle, but it has teeth as 1878's audience knew intrinsically that marriage had perennially been not about romantic love, but about arrangement.

Aleks Knezevich and Heather Lindell shine as the lovers, with a breathtaking Streisand-caliber showstopper sung by Lindell — "The Hours Creep on Apace." Robert Berdahl is uptight perfection as her Captain dad, with a vibrant Christina Baldwin as his lower-class latent love interest. Director Joe Dowling's sensual cast matched with David Bolger's dazzling choreography is utterly joyous. • **Through Aug. 28 • Guthrie Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls. • (612) 377-2224 • www.guthrietheater.org**

The Demon Barber of Fleet Street: The Melodrama of Sweeney Todd

The tale of the barber who provides human corpses for his landlady's meat pies is a popular Sondheim musical. But C. G. Bond's melodrama version also crackles with macabre dynamism, along with the innards roasting in the cellar oven!

Charismatic Billy Mullaney relishes the obsessiveness of a common man's vengeance quest for misdeeds done him by corrupt oligarchs. But ironically, Todd ends up victimizing less fortunate men.

Director Peter Moore's U of M cast embodies Victorian social hierarchy. Set designer Lance Brockman, Jonathan Offut's scenic team, and Mark Larson's lighting evoke cryptic moods reminiscent of '30s British films.

• **Through Aug. 27 • Minnesota Centennial Showboat, Harriet Island, St. Paul • (651) 227-1100 • www.showboat.umn.edu**



The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Photo by Cody Baldwin

Cedar Rapids Famous — When Andy and Barney move to Cedar Rapids from San Francisco in 2007 they expect to be met with parochial attitudes. Instead, they're embraced as founders of the town's first gay community. They even become celebrity judges of a Pork Queen Contest and local media regulars.

Playwright Joe Jennison of Mt. Vernon, Iowa, says it's about "meaningful gay love in a community that isn't exactly on the k.d. lang tour." Alex Schulte and Zakary Morton play the couple that gets married during that 22.5-hour window when marriage equality existed in Iowa. • **Aug. 6-14 • Augsburg Mainstage, 2211 Riverside Ave., Mpls. • (866) 811-4111 • www.fringe festival.org**

[MUSIC]



Bluehouse. Photo Courtesy of CPR Artists and Entertainment. (Bluehouse's management)



Photo Courtesy of Paul Banwart (Carlson School of Management - U of M)

GLBT community's most iconic events called 'Womyn Down Under.' It was a four hour, all-female concert at the Sydney Opera House." • **Bluehouse • Doors 7pm, Music 8pm • Wed., Aug. 3 • Loring Theater, 1407 Nicollet Ave. So., Mpls. • (612) 353-6781 • www.loringtheater.com**

Bluehouse - Australia's Dynamic Lesbian Duo Plays the Loring Theater

To catch the dreamy wave of the acoustical sounds of Bluehouse you don't have to go to a beautiful beach in their native Australia, but simply kick back at the Loring Theater. An indie band sensation "down under," the folk-pop duo of Jacqueline 'Jacqui' Walter and Bernadette Carroll began collaborating after meeting at a Melbourne pub in 1995. They've toured throughout Australia and the US and have played New Zealand's World of Music, Arts, and Dance Festival (WOMAD) and Scotland's Edinburgh Festival.

Walter says, "our journey has been amazing and, of course, when you go into this industry you never know what the future holds. We have been so lucky to work with the caliber of artists that we have and to have built such a loyal fan base both in Australia and the USA."

Like the Topp Twins duo from New Zealand, Australia's sister nation down under, Bluehouse has an utterly mystical appeal across the sexual orientation divide that's led to recording in Nashville and a fan base within both the country music crowd and the GLBT community. Their video to "Walking Down the Line" from their *One More Kiss* album has them grooving in cowboy boots with motorbike bubbas down in Johnson City, Texas, home of the aggressively pro-civil rights President Lyndon Johnson.

Carroll, very much a civil rights proponent, points out that "Australia has a proud history of lesbian and gay activism. We recently played at one of the Australian

[Theater]



The Cherry Orchard. Photo by Luverne Seifer.

The Cherry Orchard — Minneapolis director Luverne Seifert and his wife, actress Darcey Engen, have roots in southern Minnesota. He says, "We've witnessed the gradual loss of once-vibrant towns. Long-established families lost their businesses, creating a gradual decline." While playwright Anton Chekhov relates the loss a family estate a century ago, farm foreclosures have plagued contemporary Minnesota. Therefore, that parallel is served by staging the classic in a New Ulm house built in 1887 by Minnesota's 14th Governor, John Lind.

Engen, who plays protagonist Lyubov, says her character "is surprised and confused about the social and political change happening around her." • **July 27-31 • Historic Lind House, 622 Center St., New Ulm, MN • (800) 838-3006 • www.brownpapertickets.com**

PROVOCATIVE IDEAS INFUSE QUEER-FRIENDLY FRINGE

The 17th Annual Minnesota Fringe Festival is packed with Bad Boys, Busty Pirates, and Sex Ed. Gay serial killer Andrew Cunanan leads the pack with *My Dinner with Andrew* from actor/writer Robert John Ford. The FBI investigation regarding Cunanan's 1997 killing spree figures deeply into the conversations dramatized. That's because Ford had frequent encounters with the man who would ultimately murder fashion designer Gianni Versace in broad daylight. As the playwright puts it, he hopes "to exorcise the memories that have weighed heavily on me for 14 years." Cunanan's first three murders occurred in Minneapolis and Chicago.

Social networking's dark side is portrayed in *Status Update* by Laurel Schwarz inspired by Rutgers student Tyler Clementi's suicidal jump off a bridge last year. A male-male sex experience he engaged in was released via internet without his permission. Schwarz addresses youth issues, as well as charged privacy issues in our high tech era.



Yarrrrh. Photo by Scott Pakudaitis

Tony-nominee Melissa Hart directs *YARRRRH! The Lusty Busty Pirate Musical* by Daniel Pinkerton who calls it "the female Irma Vep. It's the lost Marx Brothers Pirate movie. I guarantee outrageous pansexual humor."

Director Paul von Stoetzel, acclaimed for his macabre productions, stages his first musical, *Nightmare Man* by Nathan Schulz. Derek Meyer as Thom-

as becomes a literal figure in other people's nightmares. The sharply observant Mike Price, of fitness model fame, also examines mental illness in his solo work *No Change of Address*.



Primadonnas. Photo by

Writer/performer Johanna Nutter's *My Pregnant Brother* reflects her relationship with her transgender brother who identifies as a man but hasn't had female to male (FTM) surgery. Male actor Jared Zeigler plays a Countess who becomes aware of her lesbian identity in the utopian *Primadonnas* by Margret Williams. The play's prison setting recalls the homoerotic and crossgender underworld of Jean Genet.

Top-notch choreographers, Christopher Watson and Jeffrey Peterson, present *How Do You*

See it? Male-male relationships are romanticized and the pursuit of a woman by a rivalrous man and woman are among situations performed.

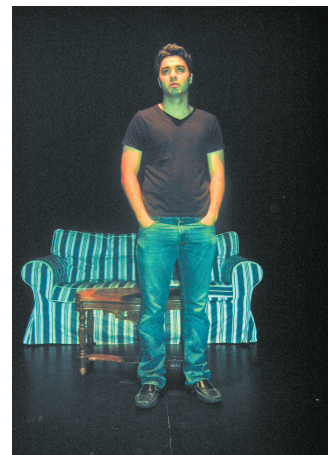


Vampire Lesbians of Sodom. Photo by Lucas of New York

Inspired by Lady Gaga, Roseanne Barr, and Margaret Cho, performer Anna Charlotte's *Meat My Package* addresses our inability to talk about our bodies, taboo sexual desires, and hostility toward sex education. Brazen Theatre remounts Charles Busch's camp classic, *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*. Mark Hooker stars.

The Tales From The Twisted Cities play bill includes *The Art Project*, wherein playwright

Reginald Edmund creates what he calls an eternal love story about gay love, longing, and loss. Levi Morris's *"Son of A _!"* is about an artist's upbringing and coming out as what he describes as "a queer artist."



Recovery. Photo by Jasmine Vogue Pai

Recovery concerns two leukemia patients who, as openly gay playwright Mark Jason Williams says "are more concerned with finding new beginnings than facing the end." □

Minnesota Fringe Festival
Aug. 4-14
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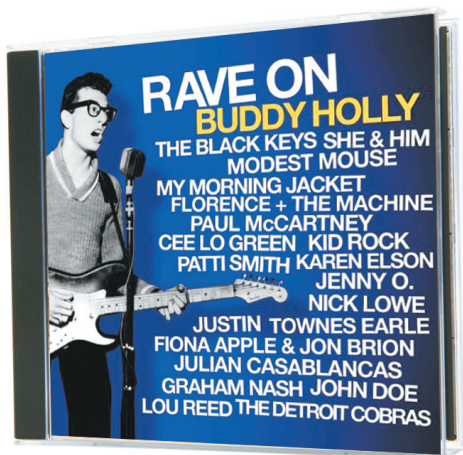
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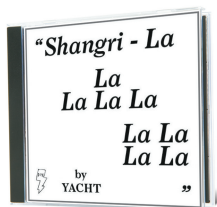
Rave On Buddy Holly

→ The all-star covers album is often a troubled beast. If the guest artists change things up too much, it can sound completely alien; hew too close, and you might as well listen to the original. For the most part, this collection navigates the troubled waters for a fun set that tackles a terrifically skilled songwriter. Most of the artists stick close to the original intent – if not the actual sound – of Holly's pared-down rock 'n' roll and country, such as Paul McCartney sounding more like Jack White than himself on "It's So Easy" or John Doe bringing all the twang he can muster on "Peggy Sue Got Married." Modern artists also get into the fun, with Florence + Machine crafting a moody "Not Fade Away."



ICEAGE *New Brigade*

→ It's pretty clear that punk isn't going to die, as the style – like hop hop – constantly reinvents itself, merging with new sounds or traveling back to explore lost moments of the past. These Danish teens go way back into the (relative) past, evoking the moody and melodic rawness of early Joy Division and the first spark of post-punk on this 24-minute debut. True or not, low-fi recordings bring an inherent energy to them as you can tell the band is truly alive in the studio, hammering out the music seemingly as you listen. While there's a lot of fuzz and noise on these tunes, there are also plenty of compelling melodies driving the dozen brief tunes on the collection that make you stop and listen.



YACHT *Shangri La*

→ And now a bit of dance-pop perfection. The project of Pacific Northwest experimentalist Jona Bechtolt, Yacht bangs out sinewy dance anthems that mix the traditional electronic chill with touches of humanity. Their fifth album continues Bechtolt's longtime exploration of utopia, prodding the topic in individual songs like "Paradise Engineering" and "Beam Me Up." Adding vocal color to the music is Claire L. Evans, whose chilly delivery tempers the utopian cheer and adds a bit of unexpected venom to the album's darker moments. Comparisons here are tough to make, as sometimes there's an early (1977-78) Talking Heads vibe, mixed in with a bit of mid-period New Order and mixed together with the primitive electro pulse of Gary Numan or Kraftwerk. Oh hell, just give it a listen.



GILLIAN WELCH

The Harrow & The Harvest

→ You can't judge a book by its cover or an album by its sleeve, which is a bit of a shame in the case of Gillian Welch's new set. Between the title, the font and the pen and ink illustration I was hoping this would be some kind of Fairport-Convention-style electric folk album. Instead, it has Welch traveling down a familiar aural path that has lost its edge over the past two decades. Welch's dark tone has never bothered me, but her earlier albums had intensity and snap that is missing from these 10 tracks. Perhaps some of that can be laid at the feet of the protracted recording process, which took years. Or maybe Welch has run out of fresh things to say. □



AUGUST 12, 2011

7:00-10:00 P.M.



Ticket Prices:

- \$45 per person in advance
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**if available*

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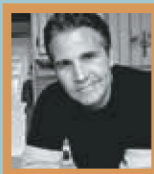
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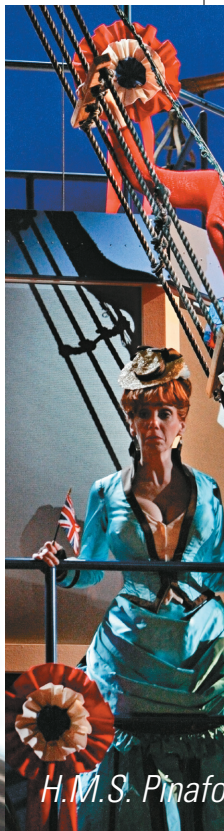
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Gen Silent. Photo by ©2010 MAD STU Media, LLC



H.M.S. Pinafo

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Luverne Seifert's production of "The Cherry Orchard". July 27 – July 31 • 7 PM, 9 PM, 2 PM Showtimes • Tickets \$10 - \$15 • Historic John Lind House, 622 Center St., New Ulm, MN • For more info or tickets, visit www.brownpapertickets.com

Ordway Summer Dance Series – Irish. July 28 • 5:30 PM • Free admission • Landmark Plaza, downtown St. Paul • For more info, 651-224-4222 or visit www.ordway.org/summerdance/

Minnesota Lynx Home Game. July 29 • 7 PM • Lynx vs. Storm • Target Center, Mpls • For tickets or more info, visit www.wnba.com/lynx

St. Cloud/Central Minnesota PFLAG Marriage Equality Rally. July 29 • 7 – 8:30 PM • Waite Park Pavilion • For more info, visit www.wmenow.org

The Summer of Superheroes: Free Outdoor Movies at Central Library. July 29 • Dusk (approx. 9:30 PM) • Free & open to the public • Central Library, Kellogg Boulevard Courtyard, 90 W. 4th St., St. Paul • For more info, call 651-222-3242 or email friends@thefriends.org

Northrop presents "Voices Merging: Summer Open Mic" July 29 • 7 – 9 PM • For more info, call 612-625-6600 or visit www.northrop.umn.edu/event/summer-music-festival-northrop-2011

Midtown Global Jazz Festival. July 30 • Noon – 8 PM • Main Stage, Education Stage and Art Festival, Midtown Exchange, 920 E. Lake St., Mpls • For more info, visit www.midtownglobaljazzfestival.org

Home for Life 8th Annual Ride For Their Lives. July 30 • Complimentary breakfast at 9 AM, Ride begins afterward and ends at Home For Life around 12:15 PM • Free, but donations are welcome • Please RSVP so we can get a count for breakfast and lunch. • www.homeforlife.org

Home for Life Open House and Memorial Garden. July 30 • Event is free & open to public, but donations are appreciated • For more info or to RSVP for lunch, call 1-800-252-5918 or visit www.homeforlife.org

Minnesota Center for Book Arts presents Book Arts Biennial 2011 and The MCBA Prize Gala July 30 – 31 • For more info, visit www.mnbookarts.org

Northern Lights Women's Softball League Games. July 31 • Taft #1: 3:30 PM/Coale's Campers vs. Players, 4:35 PM/Sweet Nuggets vs. Cedar Inn, 5:40 PM/Sweet Nuggets vs. I'd Hit That, 6:45 PM/I'd Hit That vs. TC Kings • Taft #2: 3:30 PM/Foxy Boxes In Soxes vs. Full Spectrum, 4:35 PM/The Hassle vs. BLUSH, 5:40 PM/Where My Pitches At! vs. OctoFusion, 6:45 PM/X-Factor vs. Master Batters • For more info, contact Schmell at nlwsl_schmell@comcast.net

Mouldy Figs Concert. Aug 1 • 6 – 8 PM • Free Outdoor Concert • Kenwood Retirement Community, 825 Summit Ave., Mpls • For more info, call 612-374-8100 or visit www.thekenwood.org

Minnesota Lynx Home Game. Aug 2 • 7 PM • Lynx vs. Mercury • For more info or tickets, visit www.wnba.com/lynx

Loring Theater presents Blue-house. Aug 3 • Doors 7 PM, Show 8 PM • Loring Theater, 1407 Nicollet Ave. S., Mpls • For more info, visit www.loringtheater.com

Minnesota Fringe Festival. Minnesota's festival of the performing arts! Aug 4 – 14 • For more info or tickets, visit www.fringefestival.org

Ordway Summer Dance Series – Classic R&B/Soul. Aug 4 • 5:30 PM • Free admission • Landmark Plaza, downtown St. Paul • For more info, 651-224-4222 or visit www.ordway.org/summerdance/

Minnesota Lynx Home Game. Aug 4 • 7 PM • Lynx vs. Silver Stars • For more info or tickets, visit www.wnba.com/lynx

Uptown Art Fair. Aug 5 – 7 • www.uptownminneapolis.com

"Nightmare Man Musical" Aug 5 at 5:30 PM, Aug 8 at 8:30 PM, Aug 12 at 4 PM, Aug 13 at 7 PM and Aug 14 at 2:30 PM • Gremlin Theatre, 2400 Univer-

sity Ave. W., St. Paul • For more info, visit www.facebook.com/nightmaremanmusical?sk=info • www.gremlin-theatre.org

Patrick's Cabaret presents "Singer/Songwriter Series" with Possessed by Paul James and Drew Peterson Group. Aug 5 • 8 PM • Tickets \$10 at door • Patrick's Cabaret, 3010 Minnehaha Ave. S., Mpls • For tickets or more info, call 612-724-6273 or visit www.patrickscabaret.org

Loring Park Art Festival. Aug 6 – 7 • Sat/10 AM – 6 PM, Sun/10 AM – 5 PM • Loring Park, downtown Mpls • For more info, visit www.loringparkartfestival.com

Powderhorn Art Fair. Aug 6 – 7 • Sat/10 AM – 6 PM, Sun/10 AM – 5 PM • Powderhorn Park, 3400 15th Ave. S., Mpls • For more info, visit us at www.powderhornartfair.org

Hartford Breast Cancer Ride. Aug 6 – 7 • For more info on the Ride and registering, visit us at www.breastcanceride.org

Hennes Art Company presents "Abstract Expressionism – The AB EX Show" Aug 6 – Sept 30 • Opening Reception Aug 6, 6 – 9 PM • Gallery Hours Mon – Sat/10 AM – 5 PM • Hennes Art Company, 1607 Hennepin Ave., Mpls • For more info, call 612-436-2077 or visit www.hennesart.com

Chippewa Valley Pride. Aug 6 • 11

CALENDAR



Photo by Michel Daniel



Bluehouse

Photo by CPR Artists and Entertainment, (Bluehouse's management)



Primadonnas

Photo by Melissa Hesse

AM – 5 PM • Braun's Bay Pavilion, Carson Park, Eau Claire, WI • For more info, visit www.chippewa-valleypride.org

North Star Gay Rodeo Association Dance. Aug 6 • 8 PM – 12:30 AM • \$10 suggested donation at door gets you in and the first beverage of your choice • Ballentine VFW, 2916 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls • For more info, visit www.nsga.org

Paws on Grand. Aug 7 • Noon – 4 PM • Grand Avenue, St. Paul • For more info, visit www.grandave.com

Northern Lights Women's Softball League Games. Aug 7 • Taft #1: 3:30 PM/I'd Hit That vs. Cedar Inn, 4:35 PM/I'd Hit That vs. TC Kings, 5:40 PM/OctoFusion vs. BLUSH, 6:45 PM/X-Factor vs. Where My Pitches At! • Taft #2: 3:30 PM/Master Batters vs. Coale's Campers, 4:35 PM/Sweet Nuggets vs. Foxy Boxes In Soxes, 5:40 PM/Full Spectrum vs. Sweet Nuggets, 6:45 PM/Players vs. The Hassle • For more info, contact Schmell at nlwsl_schmell@comcast.net

Fargo-Moorhead Pride. Aug 11 – 14 • www.fmpride.com

"Gen Silent" Documentary Film Screening. Aug 11 • 7 PM • Panel Discussion afterward at 8 PM, Social Hour at Wilde Roast Café at 8:30 PM • St. Anthony Main Theatre, Mpls

Rhythmic Circus presents "Feet Don't Fail Me Now!" Aug 12 – 13 • 8 PM • Tickets \$24 – \$31 • Pantages Theatre, 710 Hennepin Ave., Mpls • For tickets or more info, call 1-800-982-2787 or visit www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Imperial Court of MN Coronation. Aug 13 – 15 • For more info, visit www.impcourtmn.org

Museum of Russian Art presents "The Art of Oleg Vassiliev: Discovering 20th Century Russian Masters" Aug 13 • The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls • For more info, visit www.tmora.org

Hennepin Theatre Trust presents Chris Isaak. Aug 13 • 8 PM • Tickets \$42.50 – \$52.50 • State Theatre, Downtown Mpls • For more info or tickets, visit www.hennepintheatretrust.org

4th Annual Pins for Pets – Bowl For the Fix! Aug 13 – 14 • Check in starts at 1 PM, Bowling starts at 3 PM • \$20 registration fee • Flaherty's Arden Bowl • For more info or to register, visit www.pins-forpets.org • www.mnsnap.org

Minnesota Lynx Home Game. Aug 14 • 6 PM • Lynx vs. Shock • For more info or tickets, visit www.wnba.com/lynx

Japanese Lantern Lighting Festival. Aug 14 • 4 PM – Dusk

• Como Ordway Memorial Japanese Garden

Northern Lights Women's Softball League Games. Aug 14 • 3:30 PM/I'd Hit That vs. Full Spectrum, 4:35 PM/Sweet Nuggets vs. Full Spectrum, 5:40 PM/Cedar Inn vs. Foxy Boxes In Soxes, 6:45 PM/Cedar Inn vs. TC Kings • Taft #2: 3:30 PM/The Hassle vs. Coale's Campers, 4:35 PM/Coale's Campers vs. Players, 5:40 PM/BLUSH vs. Where My Pitches At!, 6:45 PM/Master Batters vs. X-Factor • For more info, contact Schmell at nlwsl_schmell@comcast.net

ONGOING

Minnetonka Theatre presents "Anything Goes!" July 23, 29, 30 and Aug 5, 6 at 7:30 PM • July 31 at 4 PM • Aug 4 at 2 PM • Tickets \$17/adults, \$15/seniors, \$12/youth • Arts Center on 7, Main Stage, Minnetonka Theatre, Minnetonka High School Campus, 18285 Hwy 7, Minnetonka, MN • For more info or tickets, call 952-401-5898 or visit us at www.minnetonkatheatre.com

Rosalux Gallery presents "Head Dressed", Paintings by Toni Gallo. Through July 31 • Regular gallery hours are Fri/4–8 PM, Sat/2–6 PM, Sun/12–4 PM, with free admission • Rosalux Gallery, 1224 2nd St. N., Mpls • For more info, visit www.rosaluxgallery.com or www.tonigallo.com

Theatre In the Round Players present "The Fantasticks" July 8

– 31 • Tickets \$22 • Theatre In the Round Players, 245 Cedar Ave., Mpls • For more info, tickets and performance times, call 612-333-3010 or visit www.theatreintheround.org

Dinner with the Tsars: Imperial Russian Porcelain. Through Aug 7 • The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave., Mpls • 612-821-9045 • www.tmora.org

Circus Juventas presents "GRIMM – Happily Ever After!" Through Aug 14 • Tickets \$13.50 – \$27.50 • Circus Juventas Big Top, 1270 Montreal Ave., St. Paul • For performance dates/times as well as more info or tickets, call 612-343-3390 or 651-699-8229 • www.circusjuventas.org

Nina Bliese Gallery presents Nanci Yermakoff – Transparent Spaces. Through Sept 9 • Gallery hours Tues – Fri/Noon – 4 PM, or by appointment • Nina Bliese Gallery, 225 S. 6th St., Ground Floor, Mpls • For more info, call 612-332-2978 or visit www.ninabliesegallery.com

"Shades of Red: The Evolution of Early Soviet Art" Through Sept 15 • The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls • Hours are Mon – Fri 10 AM to 5 PM, Sat 10 AM – 4 PM and Sun 1 – 5 PM • Admission is \$7/Adults • www.tmora.org

Brave New Workshop presents "Obama Mia: or The Real Housewives of Abbottabad" Through Oct 1 • Thurs/8 PM/\$26, Fri/8 PM/\$29, Sat/7PM/\$29, Sat/10 PM/\$27 • The Brave New Workshop Theatre, 2605 Hennepin Ave. S., Mpls • For tickets, call 612-332-6620 or visit www.bravenewworkshop.com



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CORRECTION

In the "Bartender Spotlight" in the July 14 Lavender, the ingredient listed as "Splash of Stout" should have been "Splash of Sour."

Photo by George Holdgrafer



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BUTCHER BLOCK

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When I became a food writer for *Lavender*, I was absolutely ecstatic. There was only one nagging, horrid little thought in my head—that one day in the distant future I would somehow tire of writing about food, food, and more food. Food is one of my lifelong passions, but it occurred to me—at that *very* moment—that there are only so many adjectives in the English language to describe the scent of lamb.

Every now and then, a certain element of fatigue *can* creep in when eating out so often...I believe this is true of any frequent diner, critic or otherwise. I'll put it this way: if perusing a menu is no longer as much a pleasure as it is a perfunctory exercise, a visit to the Butcher Block is in order. The appetizer list reads like a delicious bit of food erotica—to the point where my ordering the beef tenderloin Carpaccio (\$11) was simply inescapable. I'm very glad I succumbed; delicate, paper-thin tenderloin is lightly drizzled with olive oil, and then crowned with peppery arugula, parmesan and a wedge of lemon. If you have no stomach for raw meat, then I truly feel pity for you, for this Carpaccio is divine.

I'd like to think that even if some countess in the 1950's hadn't taken a strange fancy to eating raw meat (or so the origin of Carpaccio story goes), head chef Filippo Caffari (I Nonni) would have come up with something similar on his own. Years ago, Caffari was a Master Butcher in Rome, and he brings both skill and passion to getting the most from his meats. Sprinkled throughout the menu are his efforts to expand our use of an animal. As a once-vegetarian that deplores wasting food—especially animal products—what can I say? I'm a fan. Scrolling through the current menu, one will also find veal liver and intestine, but there are also plenty of dishes to please more conservative eaters. Caffari also cures his own prosciutto, and his small kitchen makes just about everything from-scratch.

If the Carpaccio falls outside of one's comfort zone, I'd recommend the Grilled Octopus (\$13) as a first step. Simply prepared with lemon and olive oil, octopus shares most of its taste notes with the humble chicken, however it is more tender, moister, and noticeably richer.

Post octopus, we moved on to two salads, the Avocado Fritto (\$10) and the Radicchio Balsamico (\$10). As its name would suggest, the Avocado Fritto features luscious slices of deep-fried avocado, nestled on a bed of arugula and sweet onion. The radicchio is lightly-dressed, and gets most of its flavor from diced grilled pear, walnuts, and sharp Pecorino Romano cheese. Even at a kitchen that places such a strong emphasis on its meats, these salads were interesting, well-conceived, and surprisingly hearty.

A citrusy glass of Nobile Sauvignon Blanc (\$7/23) eased the transition from the



(Facing page, from left) Homemade Limoncello; Bar area. (This page, from above) Grilled Octopus; Short Ribs Cacciatore. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

salads to our pasta course. It was difficult to choose from the Butcher Block's host of appealing pastas, but with the help of our server, we settled on the Black Monk Ravioli (\$15). Monk fish is somewhat comparable to lobster, but milder. This preparation, sandwiched inside house-made squid ink pasta, and loaded with a ridiculously rich cream sauce, definitely benefits from a glass of wine that can lend a little acidity.

The raucous party of wine enthusiasts behind us was already oohing and ahing over their Short Ribs Cacciatore (\$21) by the time that ours arrived. Its slow simmer heightened the flavors of its broth, and rendered the meat fork-tender. Served with sautéed onions and roasted potatoes topped with homemade horseradish aioli, I found my ribs to be a tad on the salty side, but overall very enjoyable.

The Grilled Salmon (\$19) with sautéed mustard greens offered one more reason to celebrate the Butcher Block's grill—it's one of the things the kitchen does best, and their



menu suggests that they know it.

The Dolci Misti (\$18), allows one to take a few bites of everything on the dessert list, but if I have earned your trust, then please take my word for it: the Tiramisu Limoncello with mascarpone and house-made limoncello is easily the best on the menu. Delicate and tart, it is the perfect finale to a heavy meal.

It's true that the Butcher Block wrestles with an awkward space, and its decor is a tad loose on concept. But that's just fine with me—If I must choose between a white tablecloth and a fantastic meal, I will happily indulge in the latter. Bottom line, if you're craving variety and a no-nonsense kind of kitchen, the Butcher Block is worthy of your attention. ▣

Butcher Block

308 E. Hennepin Ave., Mpls., MN 55414
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thebutcherblockrestaurant.com

Viva la Seven!

WHEN *LAVENDER* asked me to profile some of the area's social scene, I jumped on it faster than I do a giant plate of Chicken Alfredo. What better way to start off than by visiting my favorite Chicken Alfredo place—a place known for sushi and steak: Seven.

I've yet to have a bad *anything* there. The food is delicious, the service impeccable, the atmosphere unmatched, and the social scene will blow your Santonis off. Easily in my top three "straight" places to have fun with friends, Seven offers up the foil to Minnesota's modest stereotypes: the environment here beckons patrons to bust out little black dresses and blazers, walk with flare, and dish with class. Split into three public levels including one of Minneapolis' best rooftops (plus one private "mezzanine"), Seven is host to some of the town's hottest social tickets—from local fashion shows to charity benefits to visiting celebrities (Kim Kardashian reserved half the rooftop during her Fourth of July Weekend visit).

Yes, Seven is one of the area's glam destinations, but don't let it intimidate you. While the crowd here on a Saturday night can be described as pretty, you can't say they're pretentious. Seven's one of the places to get dressed up and be seen, but folks come out here to play

on the town—not own it. Sports fans, never fear! Seven isn't exclusive to the dress-to-impress nighttime crowd. Bring in a Twins ticket stub to the steakhouse during happy hour on game day and receive a complimentary beer (Jerseys welcome!). If you're thinking of hosting a class-act party downtown, Seven should be at the top of your list.

The staff is more accommodating than your momma. They're experts in the menu, everything that goes in it, and cater to custom requests. At a dinner party some friends and I hosted at Seven recently, the restaurant graciously concocted a signature martini to commemorate event, and lent some of the service team's help to help set-up table settings and decor.

Where: Seven Steakhouse/Sushi Ultralounge and Skybar; 700 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis

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(From left) Justin Odegard, Christy Taylor, Sean Moore, Christian Scheller, Kim Taylor, Paul Hermanson, Ed Kallio, Scott Paine. Photos by Sean Ryan

TAILGATING WITH PRIDE

Of the many Twin Cities Pride Celebration activities, events, and private parties, Socially Savvy's 2011 Pride Pick goes to Kim and Christy Taylor. Raising the tailgating party to a new level, they have moved their pop-up camper trailer to a well-trafficked location on the Hennepin Avenue parade route for the last five years. This party was inspired initially by the need for clean, available restrooms during an understandably messy weekend. After tailgating for a few years with friends, the Taylors thought, "Why not bring the camper?" An early arrival the morning of Pride guarantees their spot for the final festivities of the weekend.

Hosting a party in a camper has its challenges, especially in terms of space. Equipped with a large awning, enough chairs for a crowd, folding tables and a plethora of icy coolers, the camper becomes home base for a wide variety of faces—the Taylors' friends and friends of those friends. The key

players are from their bowling team, a motley crew of folks dedicated to good times. The team uses the winnings from bowling tournaments to fund the party each year. When that isn't enough, generous donations come in from the attendees, too.

News of the party made it to Facebook

this year, and that meant the crowd was the largest yet—so large that volunteers had to play security guards for the day. "It just keeps getting bigger and bigger" says Kim, "but everyone is very helpful, cleaning up and keeping the party going."

Kim, Christy, and their party-planning friend Scott Paine take decorations seriously, festooning the camper and the surrounding area with brightly colored rainbow streamers, flags, and even a disco ball. A bathroom attendant (to collect donations for the party and maintain the VIP guest list) and a loud sound system sparked up instant dances with a spicy party mix that would be the envy of any downtown club.



- The **guest list** is word of mouth, like a speakeasy. It's all about knowing the right people.
- The **location** on Hennepin Avenue was a perfect spot between the crushing crowds and the busy bars. In years past, the parking lot attendant adamantly opposed the tailgate party. This year, he simply smiled and nodded, saying "Happy Pride."
- The **food** was obviously grill-oriented. A selection of grilled items, chips and cold party platters brought by guests fed many a Pride brethren. Sticking to a few basics and relying on a potluck from the guests ensured that everyone had enough to eat. An early morning breakfast after setting up also keeps everyone fueled for the day.
- **Drinks** were bright in flavor and color: punch with colored paper umbrellas. There was also plenty of beer on hand to keep guests quenched.
- The **entertainment** was the Pride Parade, itself. When the action lulled (think corporate banking floats), booming house music made everyone jump up and dance. Kim and Christy, as well as their friends, put together the mixes. □

Brandy Slush Cocktail

This tasty cocktail was served at the party. It takes a day to prep, but it's worth the wait.

Ingredients

5 cups boiling water
1 cup white sugar
1 (16-ounce) can frozen lemonade concentrate
1 (16-ounce) can frozen orange juice concentrate
2 cups brandy
1 (2-liter) bottle lemon-lime soda or ginger ale

Directions

Heat 5 cups of water to a boil in a large cooking pot. Stir in sugar until it has dissolved. Let the mixture cool for 30 minutes or more.

Stir in lemonade concentrate, orange juice concentrate, and brandy. Pour into a large plastic storage container or 5-quart ice cream bucket. Place in the freezer to cool (about 4 hours), stirring every 30 minutes. Keep stirring occasionally until frozen to ensure the brandy does not separate from the mixture.

To serve, remove from the freezer and let soften for 10 minutes. Using an ice cream scoop, portion the slush into glasses and top with soda or ginger ale. Enjoy on a hot afternoon.



CRUISIN' THE MED

OKAY, I'LL come right out and say it: I heart Italy. So when a flier came my way announcing a sale on a two-week cruise from Rome to Venice, I plunked down my money in a nanosecond—and I don't even like cruises.

Here's what tipped the scale: The Aegean Odyssey, a new, 350-passenger ship, would be an adroit David to the loutish Goliaths that muscle into many a harbor. Airfare, regional meals, wine with dinner, crew tips and shore excursions all were included in the price. No single supplement, either. Bonus: The Smithsonian, sponsoring the offer, would act as a group of 35, with our own bus and guide. The other passengers, with whom we'd mingle were Australians, Canadians and Brits, carbonating the brew.

Boring? Not a chance, from watching the ports' pilots vault from tug to ship; lazing in the saltwater pool; shoveling in pizza and pasta lunchtimes (oh, and gelato), then osso buco, salmon and the like at dinner; absorbing lecturers' previews; evening melodies by a Romanian trio; and—what am I forgetting? Oh yeah, Italy.

Rome excels simply at being Rome. "Ciao, bella!" I was greeted by a gent—either blind or a hopeless liar—as I set out to wander its streets, paying homage to its Top Hits: the Forum, the Pantheon, the Coliseum; the usual coin in the Trevi Fountain (it's worked every time); speechless at St. Peter's; spaghetti carbonara at the Piazza Navona; a walk along the Tiber. And tomorrow, Corsica.

A rainbow guides us into the harbor. We board a tram to scale the island's limestone cliffs guarding Bonifacio, a citadel from the Middle Ages—nonetheless, plundered by every passer-by, from pirates to the Foreign Legion, despite drawbridges and formidable town gates. Yes, Napoleon slept here, and today two tongues still mingle, both "Bonjour" and "Buon giorno."

Next, we glide south to Sardinia. Nova, the island's first settlement in 800 B.C., lay undiscovered until 1952. It's an open-air museum of Roman baths, patrician houses with intricate mosaic floors, columned temples and an enormous half-circle theater. On our return, the rugged hillside gave way to a lagoon where flamingoes balanced.

Next up, Sicily, the biggest island of the sea. We sailed from town to town, mooring first near Segesta,

settled in the 5th century B.C. by exiled Trojans. Normans arrived in 1040, led by a Viking king. Next, Arabs, then Bourbons, then Garibaldi, leader of Italy's fight for Independence—and, somewhere along the way, the Greeks, who erected what's possibly the world's most perfect temple—its 38 pure, Doric columns rising in solitary majesty atop an isolated mountain.

Palermo, a sprawling, traffic-tangled city, is redeemed by pockets of its Medieval Golden Age. Crusader King Roger embraced the island's diverse cultures in his splendid Palatine Chapel, melding graceful Arabic arches etched in geometric forms with Byzantine mosaics of somber-eyed saints. Yes, all that glitters is indeed gold. In sharp contrast, a mosque-turned-hermit's chapel nearby, stately in its simplicity, bears faded frescoes of Peter, Paul and Jesus.

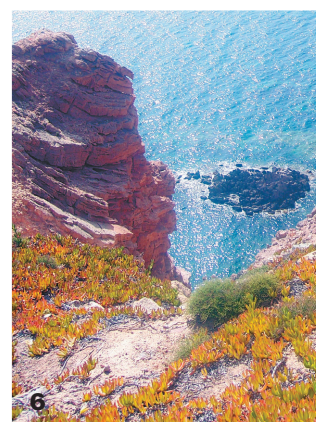
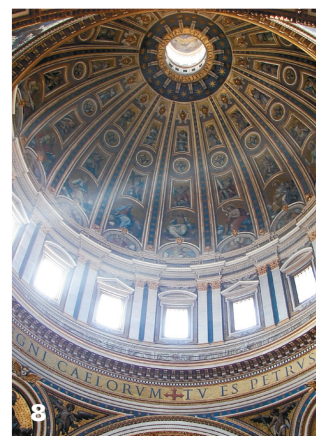
A visit to a rival cathedral, erected to (literally) outshine Roger's, is an exercise in bait-and-switch as its austere exterior gives way to an interior that out-blings the king's.

Just when you think Sicily can't get any better, it does. We round the coast to Taormina, "the most beautiful town of Sicily," declares our guide, who knows what she's talking about. From its hillside perch, the view of the sparkling sea below is worth the climb. But wait! Over there! It's Mount Etna, pregnant with the next eruption.

In between, voluptuous Taormina is an operetta set, exuberant with Baroque churches, a spider-web of shops and trattorias and sudden explosions into sun-drenched squares. To drive it over the top, it even boasts a grand Greek amphitheater of its own.

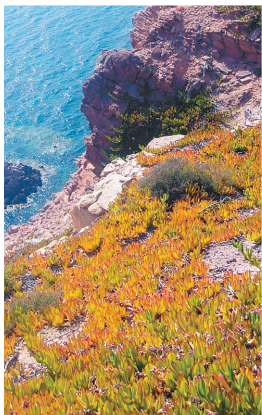
South of Sicily looms another island kingdom, Malta. Miniscule, yes, but it packs a powerful punch, for it lies smack in the crossroads of the Mediterranean. Messina, its ancient walled capitol, reveals another skein of meandering alleys, meant to foil invaders, wandering from its main square, anchored (of course) by a grand cathedral.

Valletta, the "new" capitol, founded in 1566 by the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, boasts its own cathedral, grandiose and gaudy. Outside, a squat statue of Queen Victoria and squadrons of red telephone booths remind us that the last occupiers, before inde-





1 Coliseum, Rome. • 2 St. Peter's Basilica, Rome • 3 Venetian Gondoliers, Venice • 4 Piazza San Marco, Venice • 5 Dubrovnik, Croatia • 6 Coast of Sardinia • 7 Malta Harbor • 8 St. Peter's Basilica, Rome



pendence, were the Brits. No twisted alleys here—rather, a grand grid plan so armies could properly march. Yet despite Churchill and FDR convening for the Treaty of Malta, its air remains deliciously Italian, as we discovered over pasta with Maltese rabbit ragu.

A day at sea led us to “the pearl of the Adriatic” (at least, in Byron’s view)—Dubrovnik. Other, less poetically gifted, deem it “a gem of a walled town.” Clamber past those towering gates and walk atop it, peering down at its signature red-tiled rooftops shielding streets of polished stone.

After another day weaving between the green islands that glorify Croatia’s coastline, we anchor at Split, a vacation paradise ever since Emperor Diocletian called it quits in Rome and built himself a MOA-sized palace. Within its walls today nestles everything from medieval churches to open-air markets and modern boutiques.

Best for last: Venice, “La Serenissima,” which is called by gushing locals the prettiest city on earth. All hands on deck for our arrival at dawn as we glide down the fabled Grand Canal, past frilly Renaissance palazzos. At this hour, the canals were empty—ours alone. Serenissima, indeed. We tour the Doge’s Palace, symbol of civic pride when Venice ruled this hunk of the world, whose halls sport a Titian here, a Tintoretto there, a Veronese around the corner—then the Bridge of Sighs, a one-way street to the dungeon (only Casanova ever escaped). Then we’re set loose to wander the city’s 178 canals.

We reassembled for a private evening tour of that icon of Venice, St. Mark’s Cathedral; then a canal ride under the magical glimmer of a full moon. Talk about grand finales!

For a gay old time (yes, you’re very welcome aboard), visit Smithsonian Journeys at www.SmithsonianJourneys.org (877-338-8687). □

ROME

Gay info at www.patroc.it.com/rome

The city isn’t as open as the movies lead you to believe (blame the Pope). Throughout Italy, you’ll need an Arcigay UNO CARD for admittance to cruise bars, saunas, etc. (purchase at first venue). No particular boys’ town in Rome; clubs sprinkled throughout.

New: annual summer festival with movies, theater, music, parties; see www.gayvillage.it

VENICE

Visit www.gayvenice.com for bars & clubs (four listed).



[Tennis]



The GLASS Tennis group, MN Rallies, held their annual North Country Classic tournament June 3rd-5th. In their 18th year, the group had thirty-seven players who turned out from all over the US, and here at home. Thanks to donations from local businesses and the United States Tennis Association (USTA), GLASS was able to raise \$700 for their PFund charity raffle.

USTA and MN Rallies provided tennis equipment and coached some new tennis players during Pridefest. Staffed by USTA and MN Rallies volunteers, the group spread the word out about different tennis programs available around the Twin Cities.

[SOFTBALL]



The local softball teams, run through the Twin Cities Goodtime Softball league, have had a busy July, and are winding down another summer season. Earlier this month, the league celebrated another successful season with the TCGSL All-Star Game and picnic on July 10th, and, this past weekend the league held their annual Miss TCGSL Pageant / talent show at Solera in downtown Minneapolis. The contest is a league fundraiser featuring many players and teams busting out drag performances, and is always a crazy fun time.

The 2011 Gay Softball World Series is coming up in Chicago, and several local teams competed for a chance to earn a spot in that series. The Edge and the Mess softball teams fought their way through to victory in the C-Division playoffs, and will be competing in the games August 29th through September 3rd. They will be joining three other local teams who will be competing, the Frostbite, Sabres, and Titans.

Finally, to round out July, and kick off August, you'll want to mark your calendars for upcoming softball events this Sunday, July 31st and next weekend, August 6th and 7th. The Slammers local softball team will be holding a fundraiser, described as "Slammers Embrace the Diva Tea Dance". Join them at the Saloon at 9th and Hennepin in downtown Minneapolis for beer bust, the famous 'slammer shots', games, and prizes from 6pm to 9pm. Closing out the summer softball season, the teams will be kicking it into high gear for the league playoffs next weekend. The games start at 9am at Northeast Park in Minneapolis. All of the local teams will celebrate a hard-fought season with fun and camaraderie at their end of year banquet on August 7th at the Nicollet Island Pavilion.

[Volleyball]



Along with MN Rallies, GLASS organizes volleyball teams who will be hosting the NAGVA-sanctioned MN Autumn Classic Volleyball Tournament. Held at the Bloomington Kennedy Activity Center, the tournament will feature teams both locally, and from throughout the United States. Early registration is open through the end of July for any interested teams. The tournament will take place September 17th & 18th.

GLASS has opportunities available for volleyball on various nights of the week for those with varying skill levels. Monday night is for intermediate players, at the Midtown YWCA. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights are reserved for beginners, advanced, and intermediate players. You can find those matches being played at the Sabathani Community Center. Check out www.glasssports.org for more info on Tennis and Volleyball.

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Leather Legacies

TWO LEATHER/GLBT ACTIVISTS LEAVE US

IT HAS been sobering and sorrowful to learn recently of the passing of two significant GLBT and leather activists—George Wong of Los Angeles on June 6, 2011, and Roger “R.J.” Chaffin of Chicago on June 17, 2011.

Both made significant contributions, at both local and national levels, to the GLBT and leather communities. You might not know their names but, if you’re reading this column, their accomplishments have touched your life.

Wong was Public Relations Officer for Avatar Club Los Angeles since he joined the club in 1995. He presented educational semi-

nars, judged or worked behind the scenes at many local and national leather contests, and produced events including the Mr. Los Angeles Leather Contest in 2007 and 2008. He also was one of the producers for Leather Leadership Conference VI in Los Angeles in 2002 and, on a personal note, his advice, mentorship and encouragement was a huge help in putting together Leather Leadership Conference XI in Minneapolis in 2007.

Chaffin was one of Chicago’s most prominent gay businessmen and activists for over 30 years. He started and ran several retail businesses including R.J.’s Video, Gay Mart

George Wong (left). Photo by JayPG Photography



Roger R.J. Chaffin (right). Photo Courtesy of Jason Hendrix

and Ragin’ Rae Jean’s. He held several positions with Chicago’s *Gay Life* newspaper. He produced many leather and non-leather fundraising events for AIDS-related and other charities. For 18 years he directed the International Mr. Leather Weekend’s Leather Marketplace, building it into the world’s largest vendor fair of its kind. Among many notable awards and honors, he was inducted into Chicago’s Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1997.

Both men have created huge and inspiring legacies. They leave very big boots to fill. And they leave many, including your humble columnist, who miss them tremendously. □

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BUSINESS PROFILE | by Heidi Fellner



Photo Courtesy of Vinaigrette

VINAIGRETTE

A FEW years ago, Sarah and Rich Piepenburg stumbled upon a store in Chicago that sold gourmet olive oils. Since the couple loved going to California's wine country and sampling various vineyards' products—including vinegars and olive oils—they were inspired to bring that experience to the Twin Cities. Since they opened up shop in 2009 on 5006 Xerxes Avenue S in Minneapolis, a number of similar stores have sprouted up throughout the greater Twin Cities area. However, if you're looking for unique olive oils and vinegars from small family growers around the world, as opposed to products from just one large company, your best bet is probably Vinaigrette.

A visit to the shop is a pleasure in itself, as row upon tidy row of stainless steel drums are filled with olive oil from Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Italy, Spain, Greece and California. Vinaigrette also carries fused extra virgin olive oils in flavors ranging from porcini mushroom to lemon, grape seed oil, and aged or flavored balsamic vinegars. All of Vinaigrette's oils and vinegars can be sampled in the store, with small chunks of bread for dipping. Rich Piepenburg states, "Find what you like—there's a little bit of everything." He adds, "The whole point of our store is to taste. We bottle it for you right then and there: bottles range from wine bottle-size, 750 milliliters, to a 1.7 ounce, which is kind of fun."

The staff is friendly and well-versed in

recipe ideas for every product in the shop. Want to spruce up your next martini? Try balsamic vinegar. Or drizzle chocolate or pear balsamic over vanilla ice cream. A number of recipes can be found through the store's website, and many of those come from Vinaigrette's own foodie customer base. Many of those recipes are fairly simple, but even if you're all thumbs in the kitchen, balsamic vinegar and olive oil sets also make perfect hostess gifts. Piepenburg hints, "The consumables are always a good gift, and wine can kind of get lost in the shuffle." Soy candles, imported Italian chocolates and olive oil-based lotions and soaps are also available for purchase.

In the future, the Piepenburgs are hoping to add Australian and French olive oil, local honey, and mustard. However, their biggest investment continues to be with their staff. "The biggest thing in any business that sets them apart is people," Piepenburg begins. "We are in the process of having people come in—all people from the neighborhood—and we just really want to invest in them and train them, so you have the same experience [whenever] you come in." □

Vinaigrette

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Scissor Sex

"WHAT THE hell are they doing?" my girlfriend asked, taking a long sip of her strong drink and squinting at the TV.

"I think they're having sex," I said. We were watching the latest episode of *The Real L Word*, a completely unnecessary reality epilog to the equally unnecessary fictional series that ended a couple years ago. I refuse to watch this program without getting drunk. We tried watching it sober once, and turned it off after 10 minutes out of sheer boredom.

For some inane reason, the women involved in this bizarre exercise have agreed to allow the show producers to install night vision cameras in their sad bedrooms, allowing us to watch loads of sloppy, drunken sex. In this episode, two of the women were lying end to end with their legs wrapped around each other. This allowed them to bump hoo-haas together while scissoring their legs. It looked incredibly uncomfortable.

"It's scissor sex!" my girlfriend exclaimed.

"Have you ever had scissor sex?" I asked.

"No, I've had every type of sex, except scissor sex, and from the looks of the debacle playing out in front of us, I haven't missed anything."

Before my girlfriend became a responsible adult, she was a lot like a character from *The Real L Word*. In her early 20's, she was a professional musician who slept on people's floors when she wasn't shacking up with a wide array of inappropriate love interests. She is blonde and very pretty, and she merrily admits to using her looks to hook a series of generous sugar mommas, who took care of her until she was ready to leave the nest.

We often marvel at the fact that if we had met in our 20s, rather than in our 40s, we would have never had anything to do with each other. While she was sleeping through every lesbian bedroom in Boston, I was living a life of quiet, suburban desperation with my husband. I dreamt about getting a divorce and meeting a nice, staid member of the Junior League with a penchant for sweater sets and a membership to a country club.

But in my 30s, after I left my husband, I moved to the city, got a proper haircut and learned to drink cocktails. And I dated. I dated a lot. Although I was still a suburban girl at my core, and, thus, couldn't allow myself to be too wild, I embarked on a giddy series of bad choices that kept me and my friends entertained for several years.

At the same time, my future girlfriend dropped out of the music scene and enrolled in graduate school. She got her MBA and started her own business. She met a nice woman, they had a kid, and they moved to the suburbs.

By the time we met in our early 40's, we were finally living parallel lives. We had each left long-term relationships and were living in a small, resort community. We both had good jobs, owned homes and were much more interested in quiet happiness than nightly drama.

"I'm so happy I'm not in my 20's," my girlfriend proclaims at the end of each *The Real L Word* episode.

"I'm so glad I didn't meet you in our 20's," I always say.

After last week's episode, we decided to give scissor sex a try. It was just as uncomfortable and stupid as it looked on TV.

"I think I hurt my hip," my girlfriend said.

"We're too old for this," I said, untangling myself from her.

"Thank God," we exclaim in unison. And then reconfigured ourselves in our regular sex position, which is perfectly comfortable and reliable, and never puts either of us at risk for breaking a hip. □

TROLIN, UN DIABLITO ROSA



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Dear Ms. Behavior:

My partner and I are two proud, masculine, gay men. We are socially and economically successful in the straight world. We've been together for a decade, and are raising a son together, who is now eight years old. We haven't wanted Jeff to grow up in a gay ghetto, so we've exposed him to a broad range of people and activities, including sports and stock-car racing.

In the last year or so, Jeff has become quite nellie. He flounces, he lisps, he wears scarves on his head, and he watches "Mommie Dearest" over and over. We found a copy of "Oprah Magazine" under his pillow. He asked for a formal tea set for his birthday. Plus, we've heard him make his favorite Barbie doll sing the theme song to "Cats." Jeff is a sweet, wonderful child, but we don't

understand why he's so queeny; neither one of us is effeminate.

This feminine behavior is not offensive to us, but we've tried so hard to provide a loving neutral environment for our son, and we worry that outsiders will think that we're teaching Jeff to be gay. What should we do?

---S AND R

Dear S and R:

If your son showed more masculine signs of being gay (like asking for chaps for Christmas, and hiding copies of "Honcho" under his pillow), you would feel more comfortable, since his queerness would be more closeted. But trying to force him, however subtly, to be the kind of queer you find acceptable will do nothing positive for your little nellie's self-esteem.

You can try to beat the boy into butchness, send him to a military school where they'll do it for you, or confine him to his room every time he acts faggy. Or, you can do what the best straight parents ultimately do: accept the fact that you have a lovely poofter for a son, and be grateful for his creativity, sensitivity, and sense of style.

Don't worry what "outsiders" think; the ones prone to judging you will do so regardless of what you do or how Jeff acts. And the loving ones will remain that way whether or not your son is a sissy.

Buy Jeff a tea set for his birthday. And throw in few pretty scarves, just to show him how much you love him.



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Dear Ms. Behavior:

For the past three years I've been in my first lesbian relationship. I enjoy her, but she wants to make love more than I do and she feels that I do not want her like she wants me. I love this woman! But now I worry that maybe I am undersexed or inhibited. Everything else between us is good.

In a previous relationship with a man, I also didn't feel passionate, but I stayed with him because I loved him.

I do want her, but not with the frequency or passion she needs and wants. When we have sex (about once a week) it is intense and exciting. Some negative factors influence our lives together, which affect me. But should those other problems reduce my passion? It doesn't take hers away. If I really loved her, would I want to make love more to her?

—CONFUSED

Dear Confused:

First you say "I love this woman!" Then you wonder if deeper love would make you feel more passionate, even though your tepid response is not specific to this relationship. Does the obstacle to your passion feel

physical? Emotional? You say that "negative factors" influence your lives together. This could mean that your mother lives with you, you're broke, the cat pees on the bed, or you have a chronic yeast infection.

You seem to have trouble identifying your feelings, or at least being honest about them. Therapy may help, but you should also rule out a physical problem. If you do nothing, you may lose your relationship, in which case Ms. Behavior would bet that lukewarm sex follows you like a bad dream to the next one. Or, to be less dramatic about it, you may find that you just have a low libido.

But if you are indeed capable of erotic ecstasy, then mediocre sex is a big drag. Ms. Behavior would suggest that you try everything – psychotherapy, an exorcism, prayer, pelvic exercises. This is not just to please your girlfriend, but so that you can see how magnificent unbridled passion will feel to you. Even if it's just for a moment or two. □

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What I Write

I write things 'Through These Eyes' and, I hope, through yours, too.

Some people think I don't write enough about "happy" things. Don't get me wrong. There's a shitload of stuff to be happy about for you and me, much more than we let on. You and I were born into the Bright-into lives where what we consider "basic" is luxury to too many others, and because we were born this way, we know these luxuries as expectations. They come standard.

Look at yourself. You're safe. You're literate. You probably aren't worried about where your next meal's coming from. You have a decent life, friends who love you, and the freedom of ambition. Much of the world cannot say these things. Yet, with all the wonderful things we have to be thankful for, we hardly bask in life's brightness. Pain for us comes on another plane. Worries like "safety" and "hunger" are replaced with "insecurities" and "debt." Our pain isn't unwarranted or irresponsible; it's real. It's just different. Every so often, a self-help book or motivational speaker comes along and reminds us of this truth, and to count our blessings. When they do, we feel good... we feel *damn* good. How long does that last, though?

Before long we're back to worrying about what we're missing rather than what we have. As many are the highs that we should be happy for, the valleys in life are us at our most poignant. The valleys are painful, yes. They are the moments we wish not to duplicate, but to learn from. The valleys harbor our flaws, our tragedies, our regrets, our wants. The smallest valley can seem to erase our highest highs. The valleys interest me. Us At Our Most Poignant, in the middle of



the bottom (however superficial the bottom may be)—this is when we find out the most about ourselves and other people.

This is why I write.

I don't write for you or me. I write for us. I write because I like making people smile, think, and reconsider. I write because I think language is beautiful. I write to explore happiness and agony; oftentimes, to appreciate one, we must visit the other. My columns in this magazine have extended from stupid, self-deprecating first dates to graphic descriptions of suicide and soap box nostalgia. I write to you the way I feel when I sit down at my coffee shop and open my laptop. I attempt to convey my selfish interpretations in a fashion that resonates with, and entertains, you. I am honored for such a forum in which to do so. There aren't many 25 year-old gay columnists who are granted such freedom.

My writings have garnered positive and negative attention. In tribute to my grandmother, who said always to be modest, I will focus now on the negative. As of late, a few letters to this magazine have addressed my writing as being "too graphic," "too intense," and "too dark." A technique I use in some of my writing, particularly in those "dark" situations, places the reader with me at an event-to feel with me the pang of hurt in that moment. This calls for sometimes gut-wrenching imagery. I do this because such is life.

Rarely can we appreciate a truth without experiencing it. I've described in detail some painful memories of my past, and of others'. I've done so not to portray myself as an emotional mess, but as an honest mess (though I mind neither). For your trust and eyes, I bare my soul. Does this mean I'm a Debbie Downer? Does it fit in the pages of this magazine? To some extent, yes. Many of you appreciate the gritty—it's a little different; but the last thing I want to do is have those dark details consume my message; they're the means, not the end. The tone of this column may change somewhat in coming months. I'll still deliver to the best of my ability poignancy when it's called for, comedy when we want it, and hope when we need it.

"These Eyes" aren't just mine. They're yours, too. ■

I love hearing from you! Feel free to share your thoughts with a Letter to the Editor or via Facebook at Facebook.com/JustinJonesWriter.

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